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D. J. Enright on Milton's theology

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MODERN HISTORY

LARRY I. BLAND and SHARON R. RITENOUR (Editors)

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall: Volume 1, The Soldierly Spirit, December 1880-June 1939 742pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £21. 08018 25520 0

April 23, 1939 was one of Franklin Roosevelt's best days. It was then that he informed Brigadier-General George Marshall that he was to be the next Army Chief of Staff. No doubt Marshall's warrior namesake, the saint whose feast-day it was, had a hand in the matter. For none of America's soldiers was to perform more valuable services during the coming war than Marshall; nor is it easy to think of any American citizen who surpassed his contribution - as emissary to China, as Secretary of State, as Secretary of Defence - in the years after 1945. The publication of his selected papers, beginning with the present volume (there are to be five others) is therefore an important, even a necessary, event. All concerned are to be congratulated.

I was once earnestly advised, by a most distinguished historian of war, not lightly to use words like "great" or "genius" in connection with generals (I think we were discussing Robert E. Lee at the time); but no one, I suppose, would deny that Marshall was an immensely capable commander; and there can be equally little doubt that, professional attributes aside, he was a great man. His character may, indeed, in years to come, prove to be his most valuable legacy to his countrymen. It was as impressive as that of other George's, as Washington's, Marshall, indeed, a very distant relation of the great Chief Justice of that name (characteristically, he deprecated his father's insistence on the kinship: "... kind of poor business. It was time for somebody to swim for the family again") may be called the last of the Virginians: even though he was born in western Pennsylvania and had a Pittsburgh accent. For not only did he attend the Virginia Military Institute, like the great men of the Commonwealth he gave unfaltering, unwavering service to his country and his profession all his life; accepted the blows of fate with stoic courage; was always upright and considerate in all his dealings; and exacted dutiful performance as rigorously from others as from himself.

His attitudes and opinions on almost all matters would, if summarized, sound conventional; but he did not hold them in a conventional way. For he was sharply intelligent, and every view he expressed, at any rate on paper, was based on deep and accurate reflection. He was as scrupulously truthful as the Washington of legend, refusing to write his memoirs on the grounds that only the truth would serve; and would wound too many people; and had a much better temper, ably, at his first meeting with General Pershing. Young Captain Marshall thought the commander-in-chief had been unjust to Marshall's superior officers, and said so to his face, loud and clear. He was intensely ambitious, but schooled himself to wait patiently for advancement, never pushing forward. Above all, perhaps, he knew how to turn disappointments to advantage, and made whatever happened to him the means of improving his military skills. He was indeed such a happy warrior as every man at arms should wish to be. Morally, he makes MacArthur, Eisenhower and Patton seem pygmies.

Marshall has been fortunate in his official biographer, Forrest Pogue; but Pogue's first volume is far shorter than the more than 700 small-print pages of the one now under review. This added length would not necessarily make the new book welcome. Marshall was not much of a writer, though years of producing official documents - letters, reports, speeches, memos - which had to be accurate and comprehensible, gave him in the end a straightforward fluency that almost amounted to a style. He had an interesting life. But more than that was needed to warrant his editors' labours. Larry I. Bland and Sharon R. Ritenour might have justified themselves by picking out of the Marshall archive those documents which throw light on American army life in the first forty years of our century; and only incidentally reveal Marshall. Very wisely they have rejected this course and instead produced what amounts to a documentary biography. All the items printed (they are unnumbered, so I can only guess that there are about 500 of them) throw light on Marshall's mind, or personality, or career. Not all the documents are from the general's pen, or his typewriter; there is, for example, a touching letter from his second wife to President Roosevelt thanking him for

The last of the Virginians

Hugh Brogan

appointing her husband Chief of Staff; but most of them are, and almost every single one is interesting. My only complaint is that there are not quite enough of them. Marshall wrote very little for publication at any time, but that makes the few articles which he contributed to army journals in his youth all the more interesting: even so single-hearted a character must have shown the effects of the law by which we are not quite the same in words meant for print as in words for private consumption; however meagre, the articles should have appeared here, especially as they do not seem to have been reprinted anywhere else.

Volume One shows the man as I have described him. Its main theme, a thorough professional, both in terms of his personal training and in his views of modern warfare, and the American army's mission. He was early spotted as having all the attributes of an ideal staff officer: he was only a lieutenant in 1914, when it was first predicted that he would be Chief of Staff. But the ideal staff officer is not what many people thoughtlessly suppose. Marshall hated desk jobs. He was always yearning for the direct command of troops and said repeatedly that he was a country boy, unfit for life in towns. He became

it out. He was not always, or perhaps often, successful. The editors dryly point out that in spite of his efforts, as Deputy Chief of Staff, to do something about the army's baroque tables of organization, they were as bad as ever two years later: "In 1941, the Headquarters, Field Army ... had n twenty-three columns, seventy-eight row table with seventeen lettered footnotes for slightly less than seven hundred men."

But Marshall's struggle well illustrates his order of priorities, as does the speech he gave in 1939 to the National Rifle Association (which was apparently a useful organization in those days) when he came as near as he ever did to eloquence:

Once the field of action has been reached and the deployment completed, the Infantry soldier becomes an isolated individualist, with all the frailties of the individual magnified n thousandfold. Only a corporal remains nearby to back him up, upon whom he can depend for reassurance. He lacks a physical rallying point - no ship, no heavy gun, no fortification, nothing but a few scattered buddies. He is a young fellow, depressed by a heavy physical burden on his back, exhausted by long marches of concentration and deployment, and lack of food, and he is virtually alone under the terrific pounding of hostile fires of every character. Of himself, by himself, he can apparently do very little, though collectively he can win the war.

It is easy to infer, from these sentences, what insights Marshall had gathered from the First World War, and much of this volume shows him arguing, for them against all comers. There was one famous occasion in 1938 in the White House when FDR held forth enthusiastically on the supremacy of aircraft in modern warfare and the desirability of sacrificing all other considerations to the necessity of having thousands of the things as rapidly as possible. Everyone agreed except the Junior brigadier-general sitting on a remote sofa. The President turned to him: "Don't you think so, George?" (Marshall did not appreciate this familiarity, and Roosevelt never called him "George" again). "Mr. President, I am sorry, but I don't agree with that at all," Roosevelt, to his eternal credit, was most favourably impressed.

But it was not only the war in France which deepened Marshall's under-



Between the summers of 1924 and 1927 Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall, Jr. served in the "United States Army Forces in China" based at Tientsin to protect American lives and property against anti-foreign activities of the Boxer Rebellion kind. Here he is photographed on hunting with Captain Frank B. Hayne (left) at the seashore training camp site of Non To Su: reproduced from the book reviewed here.

For the rest, this is a volume without serious blemish. There ought to have been a proper list of illustrations; I have my doubts of the index (for example, why is there only one entry under "Gettysburg map", something of the almost comic themes running about?); and I see no point in reproducing mere alphas of the typewriter (Marshall's rather endearing misspellings are another matter). Otherwise the editing is notably helpful and unobtrusive. The book is pleasant to look at and handle as well as to read. And the publishers have brought it out at a price which, as things go nowadays, must be reckoned very tolerable. I look forward eagerly to Volume Two.

So wherever he went he tried to stamp

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the thought that he had been jailed like a common criminal for protesting against the brutal flogging of young boys in the militia who had dared to complain that they had not been paid what they were entitled to. For the remainder of his days Cobbett nursed a sense of grievance, and a bitterness entered his soul. His daughter Anne noticed how he changed during his imprisonment: before he entered Newgate, she wrote, "the black ox had not trod on his foot". Thereafter, comments Spater, he exuded the personal injustice from which he had suffered with the injustices suffered by the whole class from which he came.

On some obscure points—such as the matter of Thomas Paine's bones—the new biography is unable to add much beyond what is already known; though, as always throughout the book, the meticulous documentation of details is invaluable. Cobbett, who had earlier detested Paine, later became an admirer of his views on paper money, and wished to make amends in some way. When he returned from America in 1819 he brought with him a coffin containing the remains, which he had exhumed at New Rochelle, intending to raise a monument in England worthy of the great services which he now considered Paine had rendered to mankind. But Cobbett received no support for this project; and no event in his life raised more laughter than Paine's bones, which remained in his possession to the time of his death. The mystery is what finally happened to them. We know that at the auction of Cobbett's effects in 1856 the auctioneer refused to offer for sale a box "found to contain human bones" wrapped up in separate papers, presumed to be those of Paine. Numerous legends about the history of the bones circulated thereafter. Spater records, "a commonly held belief among the descendants of Cobbett (1980) is that the bones were discreetly buried, sometime past, by one of their ancestors at an unknown location on property then owned by a member of the family".

One of the strengths of Spater's book is that it provides considerably more detail about Cobbett's domestic and non-political life than previous biographies. In particular, his relations with his wife and the family quarrel

during the last years of his life are explored in depth. Cobbett's wife, Nancy, was loving and dutiful, but she was more conservative and conventional than her husband, and disliked many of his radical friends, especially Henry Hunt. Disagreements within the family and Cobbett's overbearing and masterful way did nothing to promote harmony. In 1827, when she was fifty-three years old, Nancy tried to commit suicide. From then until his death Cobbett became increasingly estranged from his family. Ironically, this was the background to his last great book, *Advice to Young Men* (1830), which, in heavily autobiographical form, portrayed the myth of the ideal married couple and their devoted children. This was in fact, as Spater shrewdly observes, "part of a larger myth that exalted everything to Cobbett's life, beginning with that perfect childhood in Farnham from which he had run away four times". Cobbett's entry into Parliament in 1833 only exacerbated the family tensions. By July 1833 he was clearly suffering from a serious mental and physical breakdown, and his quarrel with the family deepened. He lived alone at his Boli Court office in London or at Normandy farm, Asht, in Surrey, which he rented from 1832. Only his oldest son, William, was allowed to visit him, and Cobbett died without being reconciled to his wife and other children. His funeral in Farnham on June 27, 1835, was attended by about 8,000 people; the obituaries dutifully and even eulogistically recorded his passing, but not one of them disputed the myth of his unusually happy family life.

Spater's *Cobbett* is everything that a historical biography should be, and the sort of hook Cobbett would have approved of: a plain, workmanlike job, with no pretension. It records minutely all that is known about Cobbett, and pursues extraneous issues only in so far as they are necessary to explain his behaviour and opinions. It is lucidly written, and is completely innocent of verbiage and jargon. Yet it does not overwhelm the reader with the implication that there is henceforth no more to be said about Cobbett. On the contrary, it is a scholarly tool which future historians will use when they seek to interpret or reassess the significance of "the poor man's friend".



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Mobilizing the movement

David Jones

JAMES EPSTEIN

The Lies of Freedom: Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist Movement, 1832-1842

327pp. Croom Helm £14.95. 0 85664 922 8

It has been obvious for many years that Feargus O'Connor, one of the most important and extraordinary of all nineteenth-century politicians, deserves a proper biography. This volume cannot be regarded as the definitive study, for it ends in 1842 when the Chartist movement had been in existence for only four years. Even so, it is a major contribution to our appreciation of O'Connor and the movement which he served. Misunderstanding of the bluff Irishman is, of course, engrained in our history; William Lovett and R. G. Gammage had few good things to say about "the Lion of Freedom" and generations of writing but careless labour historians have done scant justice to the man.

The reasons for this unpopularity and indifference are many. O'Connor could be arrogant and brutal to his colleagues, and, worse still, he had the knack of being right before and after every event. At times, as during the crises of 1839 and 1842, the sophisticated political advice that poured from his *Northern Star* looked suspiciously like a prescription for

injection to angry colliers and weavers. And, just to rub it in, O'Connor constantly belaboured the working class with his sacrifices in their cause. For certain labour historians there is also the additional problem of his open distrust of too much theory and "isms"; this landowner-cum-lawyer was no proto-Marxist.

O'Connor had, however, two great advantages which set him apart from the other labour leaders of his generation. He had, as master of the platform and the press, a truly astonishing boldness and the rank and file. James Epstein tells us, in one of the most valuable sections of the book, that it was the Irishman rather than the Englishman who was responsible for building up a mass movement from the mid-1830s. By the late spring of 1838, when the *Charter* was published, he had established scores of universal suffrage clubs and the most famous radical newspaper of the nineteenth century. O'Connor also did more than anyone else to keep the movement alive and, despite some formidable obstacles, managed to impose a kind of unity on a disparate set of causes. By 1842, when Chartism was at its height, policy and action were coordinated by the National Charter Association, the first independent working-class political party in the world. Dr Epstein is one of the first historians to grasp the significance of the NCA; it reflected the true spirit of Chartism, which was above local politics and reliance on the goodwill of middle-class friends. Throughout this volume the author keeps us aware of

the prodigious efforts made by O'Connor on behalf of the NCA and the wider movement. Unfortunately, the *Laod Plan*, his most famous design for strengthening and sustaining the political movement, falls outside the scope of the book.

There is much to admire in the style, content and analysis of this biography. Epstein has distilled a fascinating story from contemporary myths and historical prejudice and, in the tradition of Edward Thompson and Iorwerth Prothero, has given meaning to the words and actions of thousands of ordinary men and women. He rightly stresses the class-consciousness of these people and their artistic perspectives, and, fides to their relationship with O'Connor no evidence of Tory radicalism. Epstein criticized O'Connor from time to time and, after 1842, doubts increased about the direction in which he was leading the movement. Epstein gives a brilliant account of the central problem of physical force; O'Connor sought confrontation with the government but drew his followers back from the brink of revolution. The actual claims were the responsibility of secondary leaders, a frustrated rank and file and indifferent rulers.

Apart from a few errors in the typesetting, the presentation of the book is excellent. My only regret is that Dr Epstein has not promised us a second volume. As it is, he has set in motion a major reappraisal of the greatest popular movement in modern British history.

Shock cities of their age

Harold Perkin

DENNIS SMITH

Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society 1830-1914. A Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield

338pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £17.75. 0 7100 0969 0

Modern class society, in Britain as elsewhere, began to take its industrial towns. As Engels pointed out in 1844, "The cities first saw the rise of the workers and the middle classes into opposing social groups." He was of course writing in Manchester, in Asa Briggs's striking phrase "the shock city of the age", which was to show industrial society everywhere its own future. It was therefore a good idea of Dennis Smith to pursue the theme of class formation via a comparative study of two other shock cities which came to maturity in class relations at a later stage of industrialization: Birmingham and Manchester, to see if the same causes produced the same effects in Birmingham and Sheffield.

Superficially they did, though Dr Smith is reluctant to admit it. Large-scale industry, in the sense of large factories with large workforces run by a comparatively small number of great capitalists, came late to Sheffield and later still to Birmingham. They brought much the same results: an increasing gulf between the classes, economic, social, cultural, political and even spatial. The employing and employed classes, and the new and old lower-middle classes in between, came to live in different suburbs, live increasingly different lives, enjoy or endure different educations, join different clubs and societies, and indeed share little in common outside the ever more impersonal and authoritarian work-place. Smith makes much of the difference between the socially aloof and physically remote steel-masters of Sheffield, in their great country houses three miles out on the western hills, and the more approachable paternalistic Birmingham masters in their cosy imposing mansions in Edgbaston, but one wonders if the difference was perceptible in Newcastle or Liverpool.

If anything, it was more a difference of timing. Mass production of steel came to Sheffield in the 1830s, when Sheffield was "the shock city of the age". The

"Sheffield outrages"—"rattening", the steeling of non-union grinders' drivibelt or tools and even the use of homemade bombs down the chimneys of hedges—provoked a royal commission which only rescued the trade unions from obloquy by setting out to prove that Sheffield was a repudiated exception. Really large factories—for motor manufacture rather than steel pens and wood-screws—only came to Birmingham in the twentieth century and their effects are largely outside the scope of the book.

At deeper level, however, Smith is right to insist on the profound differences between social relations in the two cities, at least in his chosen period. Despite their common origin in a pre-industrial world of domestic outwork and the small workshops of "little masters", the two communities developed along different lines: Sheffield towards "fusion and conflict", Birmingham towards "fusion and compromise". The reasons for this, he argues, lie in their pre-industrial social structure and their relations to the surrounding rural society in which they were embedded. Sheffield until the great steelworks arrived was a collection of small anarchic neighbourhoods full of needy but aggressively independent knife-grinders and other artisans in the cutlery and tool-making trades. The town's élites were small domestic capitalists, shopkeepers, lawyers and doctors at most; the town's length from the great noble landlords, the Duke of Norfolk, Lords Fitzwilliam and Wharfedale, who owned and dominated the town and its surrounding mines and farms. At the same time the little masters were fearful and warily respectful of the independent artisans who proudly and fiercely ran their own affairs through the trade societies which controlled the labour market and often overrode the bench and other organs of authority with the fear of riot or violence. Yet when the great steel mills came, res came with their large-scale plant and government contracts, they leapt straight on to a national plane of connection, hobnobbing with the local nobility, and importing thousands of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers to undermine and overwhelm the small-scale neighbourhood communities of the old artisans. Inevitably the artisans set out to seize political control of the town, and confrontation and conflict ensued.

In Birmingham, by contrast, a much more heterogeneous pre-industrial community, with many more trades and ladders from the workshop to the small factory and counting-house, evolved into a more integrated and harmonious hierarchy with an élite which, in the absence of giant landlords, took the lead in civic pride and responsible municipal reform. Rather than throw in their lot with the ostentatious, aristocratic Anglican establishment, the mainly Dissenting Birmingham élite, led by men like G. F. Muntz and Joseph Chamberlain, set out to challenge it, and impose principles of enterprise, merit and social reform which they had pioneered to Birmingham upon the town. True Birmingham in its turn became "the shock city of the age", not in the sense of provoking horror and disgust but of forcing its aggressive code of capitalist collectivism upon first the Liberal and then the Unionist national government. "In this way," Smith writes, "Birmingham and its surrounding area achieved the adaptation of traditional values to urban and industrial life, and transmitted them to the country at large."

He pursues this contrast between the two cities through the "three institutional orders" of formal education, industrial relations and local government very persuasively and with many telling allusions to religion, charitable provision, the professions and much else. Whether the contrast justifies its title, whether it does indeed deal with class formation in English society as distinct from the ebb and flow of class relations in two not necessarily typical English cities, one may still doubt, but it is none the less a refreshing and illuminating study of the complexities of modern urban society and their refusal to be reduced to a few pseudo-scientific laws of inexorable development.

The Industrial Archaeology of North-West England by Owen Ashmore (241pp. Manchester University Press. £9.50. 0 7190 0820 4) contains a gazetteer, with illustrations and maps, of sites of interest in Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire. It serves as both a history and a guide to, e.g. the cotton-spinning mills of Oldham, the silk mills and weavers' garrets in Coseley and Macclesfield, the dock and Birkenhead, the weaving sheds of Burnley, Nelson and Colne, and the development of cotton mills in Stockport and Preston.

FICTION

V.S. PRITCHETT

Collected Stories
520pp. Chatto & Windus. £12.50. 0 7011 39048

If anywhere there lurks any doubt that V.S. Pritchett should carry off the palm as the best living English short story writer, this pleasingly fat volume of his stories will surely rout the worriers. It is, alas, not quite the full collection that its title suggests, so that in that respect, though only in that one, V.S. Pritchett still lags behind his closest short-story rival of his own time, the late Elizabeth Bowen—who was granted a complete *Collected Stories* in 1980. But that devil aside, here, rewarding for old and new readers alike, is a scintillating trove of around fifty years' worth of the master's mature work, a volume for reading and re-reading, one to dip into and return to, and to be warmly recommended. It comprises a rare set of fictional delights.

And one really is talking about fifty years of mature work. In his preface, Pritchett is not only being perceptive when he describes the stories in his 1920s volume *The Spanish Virgin* as practice work (and none of them are collected here), he's also right to feel that he had already "found a distinctive voice", "discovered my voice", by the 1930s. Take the third story in this collection, "Many Are Disappointed", about a quartet of thirsty cyclists on holiday from the office who are looking out for luscious women as well as for the pub and the Roman road marked on their map, and who have to settle for the mere cups of tea, dull tomato sandwiches and poorly faded proprietress of the so-called "lavern" they've come across. This story stood out sharply in 1937 from the rest of the "Seven English Stories" among which it first appeared in the fourth number of John Lehmann's distinguished magazine *New Writing*. It proved to be good a story as Lehmann ever published. It sticks in the mind, in fact, as one of the finest short stories to have appeared in the 1930s. And it's as memorable in its way as anything Pritchett was to produce later. By his own and his century's thirties—he and I see the same age—Pritchett was well into his stride; a pace that, astonishingly, he's been able to maintain ever since.

An affair of mapping, bicycling, and crossing strange terrains ("My God! said Bert. 'What a country!'" "Many Are Disappointed" is a fine representative of the period of midtwentieth-century fiction, whose customary tropes it deploys so neatly. And Pritchett's stories have gone on deftly picking up whatever is thrown by way of images and self-images, always on the alert for the representative, the representative characters of each decade they're sold in. Unfettered by modernism's self-historical and introspective, Pritchett has kept up the honourable and important business of fiction as social observing. So that if you want to understand the world of the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, or the 1960s, or the 1970s, or the 1980s, or the 1990s, or the 2000s, or the 21st century, or the 22nd century, or the 23rd century, or the 24th century, or the 25th century, or the 26th century, or the 27th century, or the 28th century, or the 29th century, or the 30th century, or the 31st century, or the 32nd century, or the 33rd century, or the 34th century, or the 35th century, or the 36th century, or the 37th century, or the 38th century, or the 39th century, or the 40th century, or the 41st century, or the 42nd century, or the 43rd century, or the 44th century, or the 45th century, or the 46th century, or the 47th century, or the 48th century, or the 49th century, or the 50th century, or the 51st century, or the 52nd century, or the 53rd century, or the 54th century, or the 55th century, or the 56th century, or the 57th century, or the 58th century, or the 59th century, or the 60th century, or the 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Naturalism for the middle classes

Graham Reynolds

JOHN WITT

William Henry Hunt (1790-1864):
Life and Work
264pp with 113 illustrations.
Barrie and Jenkins. £35.
0 09 146690 3

The luxuriant growth of English watercolour painting in the nineteenth century was encouraged by the hostility of the Royal Academy to this medium. By 1800 the earlier monopoly of oil painting in the Summer Exhibition was being challenged. Watercolour painters were no longer confined to the roles of the amateur sketcher or the hired draughtsman of a travelling nobleman. They expected opportunities to show their work publicly and to compete for a wider patronage. But their wares were awkward to arrange in an exhibition still dominated by oil. It was difficult enough for the hangers to satisfy the competing demands of history-painters, portrait-painters and landscape-painters for the best positions; their difficulties were increased by the presence of large drawings in large gilt frames. Nor was the Academy disposed to elect watercolourists to its membership. Accordingly a number of artists decided to combat the discrimination practised against them by setting up their own exhibiting body. Led by Joshua Cristall, John Glover, William Hissell and John Varley, the Society of Painters in Watercolours was inaugurated in 1805. Despite some

vicissitudes it thrived, and still survives under royal patronage.

William Henry Hunt, the subject of this monograph, was one of the younger artists recruited to rejuvenate the society as it approached maturity in the 1820s. He had been apprenticed to John Varley, one of the founding members, and could hardly have had a better teacher in the handling of watercolour. Varley was a ubiquitous drawing master, and a firm believer in the doctrine that "Nature wants cooking". Hunt evidently profited from Varley's advice that "every picture should have a Look there", but became less enthusiastic about his theory that watercolour, like wit, loses more by deliberation than it gains in truth. Hunt's other mentor was Dr Monro, the legendary collector of the 1790s who had paid Turner and Hunt to copy drawings by Corot and Hunt, too, was made to copy the contents of Monro's portfolios, and was especially struck by the drawings of Canaletto.

John Witt divides Hunt's career into three periods. The marked contrast between Hunt's earlier and later manners shows that he was responsive to the tastes of his age as it progressed from the Regency to the Victorian. He began in the eighteenth-century tradition, using line and wash in the manner of the old "stained drawings". This early group of landscape drawings reflects Monro's influence both in the choice of subjects near Bushey, where he lived. Witt expresses his warm regard for these unpretentious, idyllic scenes of rural life, which often pass unrecognized by those who are familiar with Hunt's later manner.

Sensing a change in taste away from the topographical toward human interest and greater detail, Hunt switched to figure compositions. In such works as the portrait of James Holland in the Victoria and Albert Museum, or "Slumber" at Birmingham, he explores the effect of light in an interior with elegantly controlled stippling. He also struck a vein of robust humour. Encouraged by the bistroic powers of a succession of boy models he painted such comic scenes as "The First Cigar", which shows a boy feeling sick after smoking. Ruskin, in a more than usually priggish mood, dismissed these original, somewhat naive compositions as "dishonourable to the artist". But they struck a deep chord of sympathy in the hearts of the early Victorians. A set of over thirty coloured lithographs from them was published in 1844. When John Sheepshanks was giving almost his whole collection to the nation, he could not bring himself to part from "The Attack" and "The Defeat", in which one of the Swain children is seen demolishing an enormous meat pie with disastrous consequences for his digestion.

Though he condemned scenes of gluttony, Ruskin thoroughly endorsed the fruit and flower paintings of Hunt's examples "Peach and Grapes", among the superlative Turner watercolours in his bedroom at Bramley Woodhouse. In this third phase of his career, Hunt refined his technique by painting in transparent colour over an opaque white ground. This enabled him to achieve those delicate effects of exact representation which gained him the nickname of "Bird's Nest" Hunt.

Hunt had the rare distinction of being praised both by Ruskin and Baudelaire. Baudelaire, who had been able to contemplate Sheepshanks's "L'Attaque du Pâté" in the 1855 Exposition Universelle, called him a "naturaliste opérateur". He certainly needed to be, for the bird's nest he painted before his eyes, the wish to paint before his eyes, the bird's nest had to be detached and the primrose dug up so that he could copy them exactly in his studio. His vision there was so accurate, and his technique of "fudging it out" so controlled, that he readers not only the bloom on the peach but also the smudge where it has been removed by handling. The quality of these late works resides not so much in their realism as in the balance of their arrangement and the subtly judged scale of the image.

Ruskin gave a sociological explanation for Hunt's success. His still-life drawings would look part in halls of state but were cheerful decorations for a "moderate-sized breakfast parlour opening on to a nicely-mown lawn". In fact, they were meant for the middle classes. All the same, Hunt numbered among his patrons the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Northwick and the Earl of Essex, and made drawings of the state rooms at Chatsworth and Cessibury.

Hunt is so much a mirror of his times that it comes as a surprise to find that this is the first book to be devoted to him. Witt was a life-long collector of his work; he bought his first sketches when he was a schoolboy and eventually had over 100 of his drawings. It is sad that his recent death prevented his knowing that his study will be welcomed as authoritative, and

is unlikely to be superseded. To the uneventful annals of Hunt's bird-working life he has added lists of his exhibited works and former collectors, and a carefully compiled catalogue of over 800 located drawings.

Hunt's versatility is remarkable; he succeeded as landscape draughtsman, figure painter and still-life painter. Comparisons with other painters naturally arise. Ruskin disallowed the parallel with seventeenth-century Dutch still-lives on the grounds that Hunt, in his view properly, did not embellish his composition with *trompe l'oeil* dew-drops or extraneous flies; but he declared that if you could not appreciate Hunt's painting you could not appreciate Chardin's. Witt sees an analogy with Chardin in the fact of Hunt's arrangement and the felicity of his light. He had many direct followers; the author gives a list of eight artists whose work could be confused with his. In a more general way he is the originator of a whole phase of late nineteenth-century watercolour painting, the world of Birket Foster, J.F. Lewis and Helea Allingham, in which the breath halved by Cotman and Da Vinci is replaced by a closely hatched surface. Looking further afield Witt sees in his technique the origins of the *pointillisme* developed by Seurat and Signac. An equally fruitful comparison can be made with seventeenth-century portrait miniature painting. Hoskins and Cross stippled their forms on an opaque white ground; Hunt's later manner resembles their style in minuteness of touch and acuity of vision. In that respect he is the exponent of a long-established English tradition.

An eye for decoration

Mark Girouard

EVE BLAU

Ruskinian Gothic: The Architecture of Deane & Woodward 1845-1861
219pp Guildford: Princeton University Press. £28.10 (paperback, £11.70).
0 691 10127 2

Why do most academic publishers produce such visually depressing books? What twisted demon drives them to wring their goods in joyously sublimated covers and lay out their photographs like small grey pocket handkerchiefs on a large white table? Are they haunted by the dreaded phrase "coffee-table" dooming their books to academic oblivion? If they look in the least bit nice? Certainly Eve Blau's perceptive and informative study suffers from the drab dress given to it by Princeton University Press in which the typography of the title page is almost the only enjoyable element. Admittedly, the amateurish nature of many of the photographs was a handicap probably imposed by the budget; but even so there was enough available to produce a book that would have been a pleasure to look at, and have given far more powerful witness to the importance and visual quality of Deane and Woodward's buildings.

The importance of Deane and Woodward derives from three elements: their position as the architects who tried more than any others to put Ruskin's talking into architectural form; the influence of their buildings on their contemporaries; and the actual quality of the buildings. Eve Blau's achievement has been to publish and document the considerable corpus of their work, some of which had not been previously identified, and more of which was published in relatively inaccessible form to work out in detail the exact nature of the Ruskin connection, and to make out a case for giving their influence a considerably higher assessment than that allotted to it by, for instance, Stefan Muthesius in his *High Victorian Movement in Architecture*. Blau's concern is entirely with the period of 1845-1861, when Deane and Woodward were in partnership, and reasonably so, for even if one may question whether she is justified in including writing of the contribution of the two Deanes, there is no doubt

that after Woodward's early death in 1861 the firm lived off the ideas and motifs that had been developed during his lifetime.

The book carefully analyses the firm's progress out of the orbit of Pugin and into that of Ruskin. Pugin cut his buildings up into separate segments, according to the functions of their different parts; Ruskin preferred simple solid masses as a frame to the sculptural decoration which he increasingly considered the essential element of architecture. Pugin revelled in buttresses and pinnacles, Ruskin disliked them. Ruskin was far more concerned with the use of colour in architecture and of natural forms as the basis of decoration. He was the first person to publicize Gothic and Romanesque buildings of Northern Italy, and especially Venice, and to suggest a social justification for Gothic, as a style which allowed craftsmen to carve according to their own inspiration, rather than in obedience to the architect.

Ruskin's writings did much to encourage the constructional polychromy, sculptural richness, and simpler outlines that distinguish mid-Victorian Gothic. But there was much about mid-Victorian Gothic that owed little to his teaching, and indeed was in opposition to it, most notably that bold three-dimensional modelling, asymmetrical composition and integration of sculpture and ornament which came to be nicknamed "muscularity". Among architects it was Deane and Woodward who came closest to embodying Ruskin's ideal, especially in the six years from 1852 to 1857. The Trinity College, Museum, Dublin, for instance, is a simple symmetrical rectangular block, the point of which lies in its splendid Venetian Byzantine prototypes, in its sumptuous embellishment with carving and coloured marble, and in the fact that the stone carvings were given a considerable degree of freedom (and even more in the firm's Oxford Museum) to select and design the foliage, flowers and animals of the decoration.

As Eve Blau points out, Ruskin's writings were far from providing a detailed blueprint, and in fact it was Deane and Woodward who drew well on their own inspiration, on the Irish architectural tradition, on the



The museum (now library) of Trinity College, Dublin, built by Sir Thomas Deane, Son and Woodward in 1852-57. "The first realization I had the joy to see, of the principles I had, until then, been endeavouring to teach", Ruskin said of it in *Sesame and Lilies*.

work of their contemporaries and on a wide-ranging eclecticism. Nevertheless the influence of Ruskin (reinforced by personal contact in and after 1854) remained paramount, and was recognized by contemporary writers, and was the principal reason why the firm's designs were widely publicized, scrutinized and imitated, even more in England than their native Ireland.

The extent of their influence has not been sufficiently recognized, and Eve Blau rightly stresses the place one starts looking for it: one looks for finding obvious imitations or recognizable echoes in public and commercial buildings all over the British Isles and beyond. One reason for this neglect is that two of their most admired designs were ephemeral or abortive, and have tended to be forgotten. The 1857 Government Offices design was never built; the 1856 building for the Crown Life Assurance Company, in New Bridge Street, London, was polychromatic arches and sculptural decoration were to inspire numerous quarters after its creation. To these should be added another abortive project, the competition entry of 1851 for Cork Town Hall. This design, which owes little to Ruskin, was lithographed at the time, but has

been republished for the first time by Eve Blau, who, however, seems to underestimate its quality and influence. Like the Oxford Museum, but without its Ruskinian elements, it was inspired by Flemish town and market halls. It must have been known to Scott, for its influence is unmistakable in his Broad Sanctuary Terrace of 1852, and his Town Hall and Government Office designs probably owe more to it than to the Oxford Museum. It is tempting, also, to trace the influence of its main front on Godwin's town halls, and of its triple-buttressed gable wall on Pearson's Holy Trinity, Vauxhall, and the great halls of Shaw's Pierpont and Adcock.

The Cork design is marred by its clumsy tower. In Trinity College, however, the relationship of roof to wall and wall to window, and the use of the windows, is curiously indecisive. The central tower of the Oxford Museum is swamped by the rest of the facade; the abortive corner pavilions of the Government Office design are almost pathetically ineffective. Deane and Woodward's detailing is always interesting and sometimes more than that; Victorian architectural sculpture has never done better, than the O'Shea brothers' piece Ruskin detail is not everything, and interesting and important though

the firm's work is, it should not be over-estimated; its light shines dimly beside that of Street and Butterfield.

But what would have happened if Woodward had not died in 1861, at the age of forty-five? It is a tantalizing question; certainly the firm's work in the last two years of his life seems to be moving out of the shadow of Ruskin towards a final maturity. The country houses mainly date from the last years and, modest though they are, their synthesis of Ruskin with Street and Butterfield is both original and charming. Above all the two last major works, the Kildare Street Club and the remodelling of the interior of Trinity College Library, have a splendid and integrated boldness such as the firm had never previously achieved. But on May 15, 1861, the gentle, gifted Woodward died in a hotel room at Lyon, victim of the consumption which had been eating his life away for the last ten years.

Thames and Hudson have recently published in paperback Nikolai Pavlov's *Shades in Architecture and Design in Victorian and After* (288pp, with 518 illustrations, £7.50, 0 200 27256 5). The volume, which is a collection of fifteen essays, was first published in 1958 as Volume 2 of *Shades in Art, Architecture and Design*.

ROBERT LACEY

Princess
128pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 149 1715

PENNY JUNOR

Diana Princess of Wales: A Biography
224p. Macdonald. £5.95
0 283 98843 6

HUGH MONTGOMERY-MASSINGER

Diana: The Princess of Wales
96pp. Fontana. £1.95.
0 355 65 388

LORNE LEETE-HODGE

Diana: Princess of Wales
192pp. Country Life. £8.95.
0 360 36842 4

SUSAN MAXWELL

The Princess of Wales: an Illustrated Biography
128pp. Quercus Anae Press. £6.95.
0 355 07871 X

TREVOR HALL

Charles and Diana: The Prince and Princess of Wales
14pp. Colour Library Books. £8.95.
0 355 5896 4

BRENDA RALPH LEWIS

HRH The Princess of Wales
11pp. Ladybird. 50p.
0 7214 0740 4

"Once upon a time there was quite an ordinary girl who became a princess. It is a short story, and very simple." We all know the story, and we all know it like Robert Lacey, who begins *Princess* with the words quoted above - that a fairy story can bear endless repetition. Here we have it repeated seven times, but never twice the same except in broad outline. For committed Diana-worshippers there is something to be said for acquiring the lot. Curiosity goes from being fed, in any subject, for the rest, the best buy is either Robert Lacey's *Princess* or Penny Junor's *Diana Princess of Wales*.

Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd's *Diana: The Princess of Wales* is in a class all on its own. His version, as might be expected from a man who works for Burke's, is strong on genealogy, heraldry, and the history of the Princess's life. He makes the point that the Princess's life is the most British royal baby since the Stuarts - just over 300 years. But the real pleasure given by his book is not the matter but the manner. He writes with an inspired bygone gloom. Recalling the heightened emotions of the wedding day, he finds himself dimly aware of the fact that it is impossible to capture the feelings in words at the time (most journalists and commentators had a good try), and says attempts to do so later cause embarrassment to our essentially introverted natures.

Embarrassment does not prevent Mr Montgomery-Massingberd from being one of two healthy digs - at Kiri Kiri's "unfortunate bat" and Archbishop Runcie's silvercock, which he finds the look of a refugee from Dr Who. He gives the impression, on the whole, that he feels marriage is a bad idea, a false altar. The Princess's first bachelor wave to the world from the top of St Paul's is the Prince's progress down the aisle to his bride, "rather resembling a lamb being led to the slaughter." (Mr Montgomery-Massingberd may be wrong with particular sensitivity to the Princess's discovery that the Princess, like Diana, as a child, was not "anything in a small cage.") And as for the famous balcony kiss - the caption to the picture of this occasion at the Palace. Not quite a honeymoon.

There are more pictures than there is text in Robert Lacey's book (it is well designed by Michael Rand of the *Times* magazine) but his five chapters show the author of

Majesty tripping the light fantastic very shrewdly. He knows more than he has space to write, so within his fairy-story framework every sentence makes its point, and he still finds room for anecdote and dialogue. If you want more than he has decided it is good for you to know, read Penny Junor's much longer book, soberly subtitled "A Biography", and the only one of the seven with an index. She has taken more trouble, visited more places, talked to more servants, teachers, employers and friends than her rivals. She has attempted a serious "personality profile" of the Princess, and tried to assess in particular the consequences of her parents' separation when she was five.

She comes to the conclusion that the Princess is "a survivor", surmounting anxiety and insecurity with a strong will. Perhaps she is a little bossy, even. Obsessively clean and tidy, she made her adolescent world secure by continual washing and ironing and ordering, like "a frustrated Chinese laundymaid". She failed all her O Levels (twice) through "sheer laziness", but when she fell in love with the Prince she had no problems with motivation. He was what she wanted. And she now, points out Miss Junor, has the total security of having as a husband the only man in England for whom divorce would be unthinkable. Yet this was the wedding at which, because of the marital unorthodoxy of the bride's family, the unrespectable suddenly became respectable. The Prince's aunt's ex-husband sat near the front with his second wife; the Earl of Harewood and his second Countess were among the guests, as they were out at Princess Anne's wedding.

The prize for Good Taste goes to *The Prince and Princess of Wales* by Lorne Leete-Hodge. It includes a lot of landscape photographs, renowned for its huge hedgerows and its woodlands, and no gossip, sensationalism or even sensation. It reaches a degree of excitement when describing the wedding cake ("every ridge was hand-picked") and has one particularly jolly picture of a gaggle of pressmen lined up on a Balmoral riverbank, looking for all the world like the beaters at an Edwardian shooting party. But this book is a fairy story with no bad fairy, set in a anklesome gardeo of Eden designed by Lanning Roper. (There's a photograph of him, too.)

The prize for Bad Taste goes to New Zealand Susan Maxwell for *The Princess of Wales: an Illustrated Biography*. In spite of bad spelling, bad puns and a style like a scintillating sledgehammer, her book is fun and interesting to learn, and which may not be true: such as that Lady Diana had to undergo a gynaecological examination to assure the sort of Queen keeps a locked personal diary that she calls "her secret diary"; that the walls of a room at Highgrove are lined with Harris tweed (25 a yard); that the Royal Family treat the new Princess as "a piece of slightly funky Dresden". Miss Maxwell even found a woman had actually regained her long-lost sight in time to watch the wedding.

Best Supporting Actor is James Whitaker, the *Daily Star* royal sleuth, who like "a lover-in-opposition" shadowed Lady Diana from the moment she became a queen. Robert Lacey writes him into the script: "You fancy her", Mr Whitaker would shout at her husband as he clambered out of bed before dawn to take up his doctored vigil on wintry mornings.

"Of course I fancy her", Mr Whitaker would retort. "Everybody fancies her."

Whitaker was "possibly as besotted by Diana as Charles ever will be", writes Penny Junor. Runner-up in this class is the President of Zimbabwe, partly for having the wit to be called Banna, and partly because he wrote for the Prince's shorter and better poem than the Laureate's.

It was worth living for the one most loving.

The prize for the One Most Boring is shared between the Ladybird offering (but then it only costs 50p) and Trevor Hall's *Charles and Diana: The Prince and Princess of Wales*. The pictures in the latter are as good as anyone's. The designer has chosen to display the text in very small print on a grey background - perhaps as a deterrent for M.Hall produces passages like this:

The inevitable consequence is that each role becomes defined according to the activities of its incumbent in performance, with the proviso that those activities - and any private pursuits which are likely to be acceptable by reference to the social and moral levels at which the Queen's subjects conduct, or are expected to conduct, their everyday lives.

Fie. The Princess did not get where she is today by juggling with incumbent and proviso. We do not want to have to think when we read our Lady Diana books.

When it comes to what we do want - the personal details behind the public record - it is unfair on the authors that there is no way for the ordinary reader to tell who has got it right and who has got it wrong. As Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd writes with his irresistible melancholy, "we have to try and stick to some of the facts". Here are some of the facts, gleaned from all these books: Lady Diana passed her driving test the first time. Lady Diana failed her driving test the first time. As a child, she was devoted to her teddy, which she has probably accompanied her to Highgrove. As a child, she never cared a rap for her teddy, which sat alone on a shelf. Diana, like her sisters, never got on with her step-mother and was unimpressed by her step-grandmother Barbara Cartland's "ally books".

Diana, unlike her sisters, did not reject her step-mother and as a schoolgirl limited her leisure reading entirely to Barbara Cartland novels. Prince Andrew and she used to write to one another who she was at West Heath and he at Gordonston. Prince Andrew and she have never corresponded. Lip-readers report that before the balcony kiss the Prince muttered he was "not going in for that sort of caper" (ao prizes for guessing whose book that comes to). Lip-readers report that before the balcony kiss the Prince said "Wall, how about it?" and the Princess, "Why ever not?" And so on.

Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus in the best of these books on some major issues. Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, Susan Maxwell, Robert Lacey and Penny Junor all make much the same general points about the sort of girl the Princess was before her marriage, and about what girls like her - "she and her friends were almost interchangeable" according to Penny Junor - do and do not represent. They are a "new breed", cheerful, ascertive and conventional, rejecting, according to Montgomery-Massingberd, the snobbishness of their parents as well as the "insouciant trendiness of the 1960s and its dreary consequences". This born-again generation, writes Robert Lacey, represents and appeals to "a world grown sick of rebels and ravens", and the Princess's triumph is to be, as Susan Maxwell puts it, "a virtuous woman". Healthy, unambitious, Stanes Raogers, with rich parents living in large houses in the shires - not so much a new breed, some might think, as a reversion to type - they form an outcast group that rarely makes the gossip columns. The Princess does not have sophisticated, bohemian or intellectual among her close friends.

There is also agreement on the total suitability of the match. The Spencers have been close to the Royal Family for generations, brought up at Sandringham, and a childhood friend of the Prince's younger brothers, the Princess was literally the girl next door. Prince Charles, though a teenager in the late 1960s, was never a rebel or a raver, the "new breed" suits him. Yet the age-difference brings some problems. The Princess is said not to be enchanted by her husband's older friends, and to be dangerously bored

by long periods at Balmoral and the incessant shooting and fishing that takes up so much of the Windsor's days there.

All are agreed that the Queen loves her new daughter-in-law and is outstandingly indulgent and protective about her. The Duke of Edinburgh is remarkable by his absence from these books except as an attendant lord; Robert Lacey alone mentions his reaction to the Princess - "He would really sparkle in her presence."

The final major area of consensus is to quote Lacey again, that "she fell in love with a prince and he, warmed by her affection, fell in love with her." But not for quite a while. During the summer of 1980 when Diana first came to his notice, making no secret to him of her feelings, he was still bruised by the recent tempestuous ending of his very real affair with Anna Wallace - refused his offer of marriage. (Penny Junor is the only one who goes fully into this; the others since this is the Princess's story, tend to gloss over the Prince's previous amours.)

While Mr Whitaker and his colleagues were dogging Lady Diana in their attempt to discover the Prince's intentions, she was almost as much in the dark as they were. The Prince fell in love with his bride in step with the rest of the world - or perhaps one behind the rest of the world - and like the rest of us was impressed with her grace and discretion in difficult circumstances.

Once engaged, she blossomed. She also got a lot of lovely new clothes. Once married, the Frog Prince lost his frogginess; after the honeymoon, writes Penny Junor, "he seemed unable to keep either his hands or his eyes off his bride". Her instant pregnancy was welcomed by both of them. Robert

Lacey, who has recruited Edmund Leach for his thoughts on the necessity of myth and the reassuring symbolism of royal procreation, ends his book by saying that "it is important to us that the magic does not die" - which is why, he says, we hope that the fairy story will end in the proper way, and that the Princess of Wales and her Prince, and their son, will live happily ever after. It may be important to us, but it's far more important to them. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

Volume XXXI of the Publications of the Northamptonshire Record Society is *The Red Earl: The Papers of the Fifth Earl Spencer, 1835-1910, Volume 1: 1835-1883*, edited by Peter Gordon (328pp, Northamptonshire Record Society, £15 0 901275 45 X). It contains the papers of John Poyntz Spencer, fifth Earl Spencer, in public and private manuscript collections. The first entry is a letter from Harrow, written in 1852, in which Spencer (then Lord Althorp) complains of having to learn thirty-four chapters of Thucydides for an examination. The period covered includes Spencer's time as Viceroy of Ireland, his educational reforms, his term as Lord President of the Council and his three terms as Master of the Pytchley Hounds - this last enthusiasm accounts oddly with Spencer's reputation as the man who introduced barbed wire into England. Many of the letters exchanged between Lord Spencer and his wife concern the repair and redecoration at Althorp. Lord Spencer appears to have been against expensive alterations: "Moreover the House is really very comfortable. Our predecessors for two generations have gone on without change, and it is not a change of absolute necessity." The visits to Althorp of Elizabeth, Empress of Austria and her outings with the Pytchley are also described.

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**BODLEY
HEAD**

commentary

Subtle feeling for a brass band

Michael Holroyd

Captain Brassbound's Conversion
Theatre Royal, Haymarket

In his programme note on *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, the director Frank Hauser tells us that Shaw wrote this play "in 1899 expressly for Ellen Terry" and that "what stimulated Shaw originally was the publication in 1897 of *Travels in West Africa* by Mary Kingsley".

As the origin of *Brassbound*, Shaw pointed to a remark made by Ellen Terry on the birth of Gordon Craig's eldest daughter: that now she was a grandmother nobody would ever write her a play. "I immediately wrote *Brassbound* for her," he explained, "not of a natural desire to contradict" as she said. "It is a pretty story, though it does not seem to fit the fact that Rosemary Craig had been born over five years before Shaw began his play. The real motive behind it was similar to that behind his Napoleonic 'historiote' *The Man of Destiny*, to make another effort to infiltrate Irving's Lyceum with Shawian drama or, in failing, to remove Ellen from the stage's centre and rescue her from the collapse of Irving's theatrical career."

Lady Cicely Waynflete is not exactly a portrait of Ellen Terry. It is a vehicle that incorporates something of her manner and magnifies it hugely. This was how he wanted her to be: this was how, if she was to subdue the monstrous Irving and finally become free of him, she must be. But Ellen, who had more fear in her than Shaw wished to acknowledge, could not recognize herself in the part. "Of course you never really meant Lady Cicely for me," she teased him. But he had. He had meant her, through the magic of his words, to become Lady Cicely and convert Irving. "Never was there a part so deeply written for a woman as this for you," he replied.

Go then, wretch, and get... some nice new part with a name like the latest hairwash, and be as romantic and picturesque as you please. Send to your library for two books of travel in Africa: one Miss Kingsley's (have you met her?) and the other H. M. Stanley's. Compare the brave woman with her commonsense and good with the wild-beast man, with his elephant rifle, and his atmosphere of dread and murder... Have you found in your own life and your own small affairs no better way, no more instructive heart wisdom, no warrant for trusting to the good side of people instead of terrorizing the bad side of them? I - poor idiot - thought the distinction of Ellen Terry was that she had this heart wisdom. I accordingly give you a play in which you stand in the very place where Imperialism is most believed to be necessary... Oh Ellen, Ellen, Ellen, Ellen. This is the end of everything.

The intensity of this letter pierced through Ellen's self-protective niceness as the play had never done. "Of course I know it's me all the while. My fault... What is the good of words to me? But words were all I had to give; the power of words to change lives. And she could not change. To convert her words into her actions and make them come true would mean emerging from the womb of the Lyceum and orphaning herself from the sterile figure of Irving. She was in her fifties; it was too late."

The figure of Lady Cicely seems to have been an amalgam of various people: if her actress model was Ellen Terry and her historical model Mary Kingsley, her literary model was Shelley's "The Witch of Atlas" which provided Shaw with a working title for the play. He makes specific reference to Shelley by having Lady Cicely state her determination "to go to those mountains which she saw from the mountain garden." "The Atlas Mountain," where Shelley's "Witch of Atlas" lived, we'll make an excursion to them

tomorrow... By setting the action of his adventure in the place where Shelley's poetic vision of a white goddess quenched

... the earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood - 'till men should live and move

Harmonious as the stars above

Shaw was emphasizing the asexuality of her heroine's power. She is the female equivalent in Shaw's world of Caesar from *Caesar and Cleopatra* and an embodiment through the exercise of beneficent Will of the philosophy of fearless optimism he had worked out in *The Perfect Wagnerite*. She uncrupulously forces gentleness on everyone, having (as Shaw noted in his stage directions) the "steadfast candour peculiar to liars who read novels". Like Caesar, she is unorthodox and pragmatic, surrounded by harmless bullies brought up to believe in the justice and morality of vengeance, cruelty and punishment, whom she must constantly outwit. She is Shaw's ideal of womanhood whose model in life was Charlotte Payne-Townshend, the only woman who had apparently got the better of him in his philandering days; the conventional, matronly lady

History or homily

Graham Swift

Our Friends in the North
The Pit, Barbican Centre

As if acknowledging *Henry IV*, inaugurating the Barbican Theatre above, Peter Flannery subtitles his *Our Friends in the North*, which plays in The Pit downstairs, "A History Play". A description which seems to deflect attention away from political purpose or even moral analysis and lay the emphasis on narrative and exposition. One of Flannery's main characters, Austin Donohue, a machinating Newcastle councillor and PR man, says, albeit in one of his more manic and self-deluding moments: "There's a war being waged right now... for control over people's perception of the last twenty years"; and Flannery rises to the challenge, "with its implicit complications, of these words."

On a narrative level the play is admirably successful - up to a point. It is no small achievement to condense into an evening's theatre a period starting on the eve of the Wilson era and ending on the eve of Thatcherism. No small achievement either to weave together so many of that period's tacky strands: local government connivance over housing contracts in Newcastle (for Flannery's builder, Edwards, read Poulson); corruption in the Metropolitan Police; the porn boom; sanction-busting in Rhodesia; last-minute fudging in Whitehall (where for Flannery's Home Secretary Seabrook, read Reginald Maundling - and enter again Edwards/Poulson).

In one sense, of course, Flannery does not have to do any weaving together. The web of corruption does it for him. The connections between legitimate and shady spheres are now so lamentably familiar that Flannery's apparent superficiality or clumsiness (a senior civil servant inadvertently directing a power-by-to a nefarious club)

What are potentially more telling are the examples given of relatively innocent private individuals ("private" is a valid word in this play's social milieu) drawn into the larger, vicious circles: amongst them is George, excellently played, with a number, ominous passivity, by David Whitaker, who drifts to London, learns about life in Soho, in prison and later, as a mercenary in Rhodesia, disintegrates into a simple, which he adds the weak joke "a political dance". The first occasion is in an early scene when he parts from his idealistic, party-joining mate Nicky in Newcastle; the second is near the end of the play, with the gun of a

whom he had married a year before writing this play and who now controlled his domestic life.

The success of *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* largely depends upon the performance of Lady Cicely who is the only woman in the play. Penelope Keith has established a habit of making brief visits from the television screen into Shaw's world where she specializes in the Shavian superwoman. She made an unconvincing Onitsha (a part based on Mrs Patrick Campbell) in *The Apple Cart* but a vigorous Epifania Ognisanti di Paragra Fitzfassenend (which owes something to Lady Astor) in *The Wayfaring*. She is well cast and strides through the part with confident control. The best scenes in the play are those where she and Brassbound (to whom John Turner gives a splendidly robust appearance), are alone on stage. Shaw's desperation somehow to get his work performed had led to the gallery and the orchestration of subtle thought and painful feeling for a brass band. But when the stage is uncrowded, he sometimes allows a more complex and stimulating view of

Zimbabwe freedom-fighter pointed at his head. The implication is plain: no one is apolitical.

It's at such moments that the narrative prescription of "History Play" becomes stretched. For all his efforts to avoid drawing conclusions and any whiff of dogma, Flannery nudges us away from simple assimilation towards judgement and commitment. The play is dotted with large, resonant statements which bespeak the author's need for interpretation. The prostitute Rusty (Julia Hills), another of the play's London-struck northerners, expounds a metaphor of society as an asylum in which the most demented are the warders, the power-wielders. Roy Johnson (George Ratliff), the play's would-be corruption-purging police officer, warns, "when there's a moral vacuum, there's always something nasty waiting to race into it". Cliches need not lack truth and the characters might indeed feel these things, but it's hard to believe they would utter them quite so baldly without a playwright pressing them upon them.

Where the tension between history play and political homily most shows is towards the end, where there has evidently been much rewriting. To give historical completeness, material has been added which does little more than "bring us up to date". Hence that cursory talk amongst the police officers of escalating street violence and a perfunctory scene in which an American video merchant muscled in on Soho.

The real problem, though, is that the play - which begins with the words "There is no beginning", as if to imply the continuous, unshattered stream of history - must indeed have an end. Flannery struggles to supply one which gives dramatic resolution without posing some authorial advocacy, yet at the same time recognizes that history lacks dramatic resolutions. There is no transfigured Prince Hal here, to settle all questions. George returns to Britain, alive, from his Rhodesian experiences with a political commitment which is clearly Flannery can neither endorse nor disavow that commitment, but in his final scene he does his utmost to render its significance open and ambiguous.

George comes nearest to being the play's central character, though closely challenged, in performance, terms at least by Jim Broadbent's Austin Donohue, an unrelenting mixture of cunning, greed and cynicism, whose sudden change of wild laughter marriage to cynicism, for all his apparent kindness, he is as bemused by affairs as George is. This is, however, a deftly directed ensemble piece in

life to be heard.

The Morocco sets by Nicholas Georgiadis emphasize the musical-comedy-without-music aspect of the play, with David Collings (as Drinkwater) leading the corps de ballet of pirate sailors. But on the first night Michael Denison was too muffled and wooden to give the part of Sir Howard Hallam his full judicial authority. Frank Hauser's direction is competent. It does not have the vitality of Shaw's *Press Cuttings* currently being directed by Anthony Clark at the Orange Tree in Richmond, and it does not solve the various difficulties presented by *Brassbound* in performance. Shaw called it "the only play I planned and plotted" and the clockwork machinery of this planning and plotting tick rather tediously by during the first Act. The coda at the end of the third Act, too, where Lady Cicely is suddenly rescued from marriage to Brassbound by gunfire from his ship, seems very artificially tacked on - there is no sense of their waking from a trance. This was a trance, however, from which Shaw himself was to wake when years later he admitted to the actress Gertrude Kingston: "Lady Cicely no longer exist - if they ever did."

which many of the actors double or even triple parts, a fact which not only provides some possibly intended ironies (the corruption-purging police officer turning up as a pink-soled porn-shop keeper) but serves to reinforce that in the eyes of history people have no characters, only roles. Despite Georgiadis's blured discovery of his political self, one is left with an impression of individuals who, whatever their theoretical power, are cast in attitudes that external pressures compel. No single scheme of reference, no "control over people's perception", persists. The question indeed of who controls whom reverberates through the play. Does Edwards control Donohue or Donohue Edwards? Do the CID control the porn-peddlers or the porn-peddlers the CID? In a chilling scene an ex executive maintains a steady authority while a Cabinet minister, faced with the facts of his sanction-breaking, vainly disguises moral and political impotence. Even George's dubious commitment is only a reflex response, impotent in its own way, to a series of conditioning factors, rather than an act of independent resolve. A history play then, and not a political history - if it is an axiom of politics that people change events and an axiom of history that events change them.

The RSC with Methuen have published a programme texts of *Our Friends in the North* (0 413 500 90 X), and of two other plays at The Pit, *Doll's House* (0 413 51240 4) and *Money* (0 413 51240 1), at 90p each.

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commentary

Theatre of the metropolis

Stephen Wall

Henry IV, Parts I and II
Barbican Theatre

The reputation of the Royal Shakespeare Company depends a good deal on the quality of its ensemble, and no plays in the canon need good ensemble more than the two parts of *Henry IV*. The dispersed nature of the action, with all its telling juxtapositions of high and low life, court and country, comedy and history, requires a large cast, most of whom have their moments. Such moments, sometimes small in themselves (like the dawn scene with the carters in Part I), are vital to the unprecedented breadth of national life that Shakespeare gives us the sense of in these astonishingly hospitable plays, and a company needs deep resources if it is to do them justice. It's a challenge to the RSC that should be expected to rise to, and the idea of opening its new London home with *Henry IV* must have seemed attractive and even logical at this point in its history, given the recent success of the virtuoso ensemble piece made out of *Nicholas Nickleby*. There is also the encouragement of precedent, since the company's present Stratford home opened with both parts of *Henry IV* in 1932.

First Impressions of the Barbican Theatre suggest that it is going to prove far more suitable for the performance of Shakespeare than the Stratford house in its various modifications has ever been. The auditorium is strongly vented in feeling, the shallow circles angled forward, and the consequent access to the actors' podium, framing and dimpling what happens on stage, which is such an obstacle at Stratford. The logic of the house's structure has been effectively mirrored by John Napier's design for *Henry IV*, which matches its perpendicular quality by building three large, three-storey wooden galleries, which are trucked on and off stage with resounding speed and precision. These square towers, with their balconies, ladders, inner rooms, and window spaces, provide a marvellous warren for the Eastcheap scenes. While Falstaff and Hal drink below, the actors on the inner and upper levels suggest a busy quotidian life, the scale and detail of their activities not so elaborated as to detract from the main action, but greatly enriching our sense of its metropolitan context. Trevor Nunn's remarkable talent for thickly populated, energetically sustained stage life is satisfyingly demonstrated with this company's usual flair for the communal and the collective. Such in the text but actively enhanced it. The long tavern-scene in Part I, in which

Falstaff and Hal playfully anticipate later scenes of paternal rebuke, is one of those sequences which (like the mechanics' play in the *Dream*) can hardly fail in the theatre, but it works the way the inn population drop their various tasks to make a stage audience. You feel more strongly than usual that time is suspended; you feel more than ever Falstaff's wonderful power of making it appear to do so, the tavern scene of Part II is even more leisurely, allowing for further elaboration of business by the ensemble, culminating in a splendidly animated sequence when Falstaff chases Pistol



A works outing from "Bury Fell" for the Coronation celebrations in 1953, from the exhibition Family Albums, photographs from the albums of working people at Camerawork, Roman Road, London E2 until July 17.

up and down from one level to another. (Pistol is intriguingly played by Mike Gwilym as a mammoth study in modern incoherence.) These apparently spontaneous set-pieces of hue and cry exhilaratingly exhibit the company's discipline. The cast also set about the Battle of Shrewsbury at the end of Part I with great energy. The three houses are withdrawn completely to reveal an exciting depth of space with more actors in hand-to-hand conflict than have become used to in these days of stage economy, when two's a retinue and three's a crowd. The variety of the battle-scenes - the Douglas's psychopompic hattering of Sir Walter Blunt, Falstaff's jests and dallying, Hotspur's grandiose last words, Hal's generous bareheadedness - come seamlessly together as an extended action in which flexibility of tone in no way saps sustained power. On this evidence, the Barbican effortlessly accommodates both intimate exchange and large public events; and offers that mobility of scene and immediacy of effect that the great Globe itself must have had.

On the other hand there are times when Trevor Nunn seems over-eager to display his company's stamina. Before *Henry IV* himself is allowed to kick off with "So shaken as we are" and so on, we have an elaborate piece of inserted ceremonial - an effect echoed at the end of Part II when, instead of the Epilogue promising us the (never delivered) prospect of Falstaff in France, we are given another big production number celebrating Hal's coronation. During each celebration, actors are given bursts of music and actors crossing the stage at speed, as if they had an urgent appointment in the wings opposite. At the beginning of Part II, Rumour is not "painted full of toogues"; his words are shared out among the whole company, cowed and carrying candles, like a coven going in for *speeches*. Such gratuitous spasms of theatricality, which distract one from the continuity of political argument which emerged with more force and interest in some earlier, less given, RSC productions of these histories. The actors try hard; admiration suggested by Ian Holm in

especially in Part II, to state their lengthy recapitulations of public grievances with some passion, but it is uphill work in a climate which conditions the audience to expect a high level of physical event. Part II is a diffuse and inherently slow play - even the King is dying, and Hal has little to do - and the instability of Nunn's style is more evident than in Part I.

But whatever the qualities of the cast as a whole, any production of *Henry IV* depends heavily on its Falstaff. It is a fat part for the right actor, and Joss Ackland makes much of it

the Stratford productions of the mid-1960s. But Murphy's signals are not of a subtle kind: his projection both physically and vocally is strong, and some will find it excessive. It is true that a high degree of self-consciousness and self-absorption is quite compatible with the character. It is one of those performances that sixth-formers in the audience may well identify with but which their middle-aged teachers will be irritated by. It must be said, however, that Gerard Murphy is not the new David Warner; for all its force, his Hal does not suggest an interesting and complex interior life.

As Hotspur, Timothy Dalton shares this Hal's tendency to fling himself about the stage, although the text gives him more justification. Again, youthful impetuosity is largely conveyed by physical restlessness, though with rather more charm. The emphasized immaturity of both characters does make a final and moving kind of sense in their encounter at Shrewsbury. The sheer exhaustion during their fight, the way it declines from a grand chivalric confrontation to a boyish scrap, the way it is both grand and almost silly - these provide true and even brave moments.

The two performances also help to bring out with valuable clarity the preoccupation in these plays with fathers (or crypto-fathers) and sons. The theme is underlined at one point by an interestingly contrived move which allows Falstaff and the King to exchange a long look of inter-paternal rivalry, with Hal standing by. The reconciliation between Hal and Henry IV forms the emotional climax of Part II, as it should. As the King, Patrick Stewart exclaims "My son!" with a rapturous intensity which both moves us as the expression of a baffled parental love rewarded at last and also alerts us to the parallel between his situation and that of Northumberland, Hotspur's father. (Northumberland's griefs are nobly spoken by Robert Edlison, thrillingly subtle in the new auditorium; he also doubles as a sweetly futile Shallow.) Another striking moment in Stewart's performance is the incipient hysteria of his realization that the prophecy of his death in Jerusalem really means that he will die, not in the Holy Land, but in the royal chamber so called. But other aspects of Henry IV's life are treated more perfunctorily: the king's insouciant complaints about the enervating numbness of his subjects do not sufficiently convey the sense of royalty as an intolerable burden. The relative ineffectiveness of such a speech illustrates the grotesque bias of this production towards local theatrical effect and the consequent lack of any searching analysis of the nature and cost of power.

Nevertheless, much of the creative energy of both parts of *Henry IV* lies in their fascination with various kinds of irresponsibility - an energy which Trevor Nunn and his company vigorously tap and dispense. The opening of the Barbican Theatre is certainly a gross event in the contemporary English theatre, and these performances are not unworthy of it.

Shakespeare's Craft (177pp. Southern Illinois University Press, £11.20, 0 8093 10147) edited with an introduction by Philip H. Highfill Jr. brings together eight lectures. Anne Barton looks at the social effects of public utterance in "Shakespeare's Roman World of Words". Harry Levin demonstrates the thematic, theological and psychological importance of the porter's scene and the sleepwalking scene from *Macbeth*. Robert B. Heitman looks at "Shakespeare's Variations on Farce Style". Eugene M. Waith assesses the appeal of ceremonial scenes to Tudor playwrights. Arvin B. Kernan characterizes Shakespeare's evidence from the evidence of the plays within the plays and Samuel Schoenbaum recounts his search for Shakespeare in documents and artifacts.

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Creaturely discomforts

Anthony Thwaite

TED HUGHES

Selected Poems 1957-1981

238pp. Faber, £4.95 (paperback, £2.50). 0 571 11916 6

Any reader who has followed a poet's work, perhaps bought the books as they appeared, and who is then confronted with a Selected Poems, probably wants to know first whether the selection is worth acquiring as a handy package. Is it a true distillation of the poet the experienced reader thinks he has come to know? Other readers, who have perhaps just sampled the poet in anthologies or who have a vague memory of having "dined" him at school, will want to know how comprehensive the selection is before forking out their money.

A Selected Poems (and often a Collected Poems, if pre-posthumous) is bound to be a compilation of a publisher's commercial decision and a mature poet's deliberations about what he thinks is his best work. Ted Hughes is (and has been for much, though not all, of his writing life) a prolific poet. In *Selected Poems 1957-1981* he has not selected from some collections aimed at children (*Meet My Folks*, *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Moortown*), though *Season Songs* and *Under the North Star* are represented. One finds something like 170 poems drawn on ten books, from *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) to *Moortown* (1979), with a handful of previously uncollected poems inserted throughout. These 170-odd are the survivors from something over 500 poems in the ten books. Granted that the dates 1957-1981 aren't strictly accurate as far as composition goes (in that a handful of poems in this *Selected Poems* go back to 1954 and even earlier), the average count of the mass on which Hughes has drawn seems to be 20 poems a year. When one takes (again, according to Sagar) that Hughes wrote almost nothing between Sylvia Plath's death in early 1963 and a visit to Ireland some time in 1966, the annual rate naturally goes up.

So it is instructive to see which are the casualties. *The Hawk in the Rain* has lost twenty-five of its forty poems, including its title-poem, but those that remain are the strongest, such as "The Thought-Pox" and "The Jaguar." "Soliloquy of a Misanthrope" becomes, interestingly, just "Soliloquy." A little over half the contents of *Lupercal* are left; this book contains the chief love poems for anthologists, and their judgment has been concerned with, in that Hughes's central bestiary has been left intact - "Hawk Roosting," "View of a Pig," "An Outrigger," "Pike," "Thrushes." "The Bull Moose" (this last the title of a large number of bull-necked poems by other poets in the 1960s and 1970s).

The process of keeping, discarding and reshaping begins to look odder with *Wodwo*, one of Hughes's least satisfactory books. Originally this consisted of two sections of poems separated by a section of five stories and a radio play, "The Wodwo." In a prefatory note, Hughes wrote that "the verse and the prose are intended to be read together, as parts of a single work," but if he once held to that notion, he has now discarded not only the stories and the play but eleven of the poems too, has trimmed down "God" and "Song of a Rat" so that each consists of a single poem rather than three poems, and has made "Boon" into a short sequence of five poems, including the one retained from the limited edition *Residence* (1966). Those excluded are often those that now look like early versions of Crow, such as "Revelation" and "Lovers," and the poem "God" is a good fellow, but the mothers against him? Other casualties are poems which, typically for Hughes, appeared first in one book or literary magazine, such as "Ludwig" (from *Death*), "Marina," and "Wings" (with *Wings* extrapolations from *Scare*, *Kafka*, and *Sketches*).

At this point, Hughes's selection seems to be a compromise between the desire to include as much as possible of his best work and the desire to include as much as possible of his most recent work.

One of them much bigger than the other. Loving his enemies. And having all the weapons.

With the removal of that plank and other supporting it, one seems to be left with Hughes's sardonic note at the end of this *Selected*: "This is a sequence of poems relating the birth, upbringing and adventures of a protagonist of that name."

Since *Crow*, Hughes has been more prolific than ever. Six books since 1975 are drawn on here, some of them originally very large-scale. Most of them have been drastically reduced.

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Cave Birds is left with four of its twenty-nine poems; *Season Songs* has five of its twenty-eight, and one of the best, "The Stag," has gone. *Under the North Star* - admittedly even more of a children's book than *Season Songs* - has only two of its twenty-four. The extended "Epilogue" of *Gaudeite*, purporting to be forty-five verses copied out by the Reverend Nicholas Lumb after his preposterous adventures, now has only thirteen of its runic components, plus one pushed back from *Moortown*. *Remains of Elmer*, the ancestral/topographical accompaniment to Fay Godwin's dramatic photographs, is left with thirteen of its sixty-two originals. I can sense no coherent judgment behind what has been included and what excluded from these five books.

Putting on one side for a moment the sixth, *Moortown* (more of a bold-all of disparate elements than the others), each of the five - however one ranks them in the Hughes canon - has a unity; or one thought that was the intention. *Cave Birds* was subtitled "An Alchemical Cave Drama," a description which I for one found profoundly illuminating but which at least suggested some sort of interrelationship; and Hughes writes in a note in the *Selected*, "Throughout the original sequence of the interdependence between [Leonard Baskin's] drawings and verses is quite clear." That interdependence having been totally lost, and the rest of the characters in the drama lost too, what would a new reader make of the four chosen poems, all that remains?

Season Songs, bracketed off by the publishers as "for children," struck me on its publication in 1976 as being the best thing Hughes had done since *Lupercal*. There was no loss of power, concentration, vividness and attack; and there was no runic or mantic muttering or orating either. The five poems from it included here are all good, but in their context they are inevitably diminished, as if *Season Songs* was not to be considered an "important" book. (On the other hand, I have no quarrel with the violence done to *Under the North Star*, which is surely an amiable act of collaboration - again with Baskin - and there need be no talk of importance.)

Gaudeite, I can see, was a problem, in that if the lurid "story" is lost, what justification is there for Lumb's interminable "Epilogue"? As it is, the stranded Lumb looks like not very well done variations on Pope and Housh. As for *Remains of Elmer*, the remains are all right, but inevitably they lose strength by being cut off from the other poems that shifted the focus or caught an echo, and from the photographs that called them forth.

Moortown, the final book to be drawn on for the *Selected*, was, as I have said, a bold-all, with four books or sequences - in one set of covers. The first, "Moortown" itself, includes some of Hughes's finest poems. Drawing (like *Season Songs*) on real experience rather than megalithic megalomania, it was typically played down by Hughes as being "made up of passages taken from a verse journal diary that I kept for a while." I suppose "diary" was meant to allow for informality and aperiodicity; but the poems themselves are like no other poems I have read, with a degree of intensity, sanity and apt grace that Hughes has never equalled. They are totally different from most of the poems in the other three sections: "Prometheus on his

Crag," "Adam and the Sacred Nine," and "Earth-Numb," which are more hieroglyphs from Hughes's initials (slightly to adapt one of the poems) though he has tucked in two more circumstantial pieces ("A Motorbike" and "Doaf School"). Presumably because he realized they were good even though they had nothing to do with their companions. These last fifty or so pages of the selection are a mess, with excellent "Moortown" poems jostling with vatic pretenentiousness.

The last two poems in the *Selected* come from something called *The River* which I have not seen and which I suppose may be a sequence-in-progress; a third poem, also credited as coming from *The River*, is fitted in between the selections from *Gaudeite* and *Remains of Elmer*. All three are to do with salmon, and they show the watchful celebratory eye of the best "Moortown" poems. If this is the way Hughes is going, excellent. His is a capacious talent which seems to change direction, soar, lose height, lose itself, recover, and then inexplicably repeat its own worst faults, again and again. These *Selected Poems* may well make good sense as a publisher's piece of merchandise, aimed at those new readers who aren't prepared to shell out the considerable amount necessary to buy all Hughes's books (and I believe all are in print). The publishers' blurred intent is that it should provide for these readers a "comprehensive introduction." This it does not do, and probably no Hughes selection of 238 pages could. As for the publishers' other intention - that it should be a portable complement to the books already on their shelves - I know already which books I go back to and which I normally leave to gather dust.

Puzzles, Problems and Enigmas consists of forty-two occasional pieces, the shortest item being a mere two pages, and the longest twenty-seven. The essays are grouped in sections: research as art; philosophical issues; science as a profession; science and society; science and the Third World; relations with Soviet science; scientific communication; and education. The shortest essay, on Einstein, reveals Ziman's nurturing of the hope that he may one day receive from one of his former students, with a reputation as yet unmade, a manuscript instantly recognizable as a work of genius. This is an agreeable

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PHILOSOPHY

The primacy of expertise

Joseph Agassi

JOHN ZIMAN

Puzzles, Problems and Enigmas: Occasional pieces on the human aspects of science

373pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50. 0 521 23659 2

This volume, by an eminent scientist and commentator on science, should give pleasure to many and offence to none. Doubtless, it is lightweight and not quite avant-garde, so that professionals who do for a living what John Ziman does in this volume for fun will probably ignore it after giving it a glance. That will be a pity.

Among the pleasures of *Puzzles, Problems and Enigmas* are the witty, very agreeable style in which the book is written and its mastery of exposition of opinions and prejudices current among leading scientists. These virtues are, however, offset by the amateur fashion in which the author defends the professionalism of contemporary science. No amount of casuistry can resolve this opposition - least of all Ziman's own (just) critique of professionalism; its effect on the author's diverse pronouncements is often devastating.

Puzzles, Problems and Enigmas consists of forty-two occasional pieces, the shortest item being a mere two pages, and the longest twenty-seven. The essays are grouped in sections: research as art; philosophical issues; science as a profession; science and society; science and the Third World; relations with Soviet science; scientific communication; and education. The shortest essay, on Einstein, reveals Ziman's nurturing of the hope that he may one day receive from one of his former students, with a reputation as yet unmade, a manuscript instantly recognizable as a work of genius. This is an agreeable

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Keith Bosley

Dabblers in literature

Peter Keating

JOANNE SHATTOCK and MICHAEL WOLFF (Editors)

The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings
400pp. Leicester University Press. £28.
0 8020 2463 7

For many late Victorian commentators, looking back on a century of bewildering social change and trying to make sense of it, the growth and influence of the periodical press stood out as a major feature. George Saintsbury argued that the expansion of "periodical literature" was even more characteristic of the age than "the enormous popularisation and multiplication of the novel". T. H. S. Escott, making much the same general point, saw Britain as a country full of men and women eager to turn their thoughts into print: "Most moderately well-educated people nowadays are actual or potential authors. They have dabbled in literature for purposes of pleasure or profit, they have published a book, or they have written magazine or newspaper articles."

Modern scholars have followed their Victorian counterparts in acknowledging the centrality of Victorian periodicals and newspapers to our understanding of the age: virtually all serious studies of Victorian Britain draw extensively on the press for documentation, and many popular studies are little more than anthologies of material taken from the periodicals. The press as a subject has its own right, however, to receive less attention. There are some wide-ranging surveys, a few excellent studies of the reading public (seen mainly in relation to particular types of periodical), and a fairly large number of monographs on individual papers and editors. Even so, it is no doubt true, as Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff point out in their introduction to *The Victorian Periodical*

Press, that the "systematic and general study of the press has hardly begun". The sub-title of their book has been carefully chosen to reinforce this belief. What they offer are "samplings and soundings", fourteen exploratory essays by different writers, stages towards an eventual full-scale, inclusive study.

There is something audacious about even contemplating that ultimate goal. The difficulties involved were outlined by Walter Houghton in the first volume of his pioneering *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* which was published in 1966, and they still sound daunting. For a start, nobody appears to know how many items make up the Victorian press. In his contribution to the present book Houghton fixes the figure at "over 25,000 journals of all kinds including newspapers", but as obscure Victorian publications continue to be unearthed that total could be conservative. Shattock and Wolff, with the unashamed romanticism that characterizes their approach, refer to "literally millions of serial articles out there whose allure we dare not admit". Even if a reliable total could be established, there would still remain problems of identifying long-forgotten editors, journalists, publishers and printers, as well as trying to clarify how such journals were financed, who owned and who read them.

Houghton's solution to these apparently insoluble problems has been to concentrate attention on those periodicals which are usually regarded as having exerted most influence on the opinions of the "artistic classes". It is sensible, perhaps necessary, type of compromise. Shattock and Wolff admit that the "sheer bulk and range of the Victorian periodical press make it so unwieldy as to defy systematic and general study", but it is the qualifying "seem" that catches the eye and indicates the ambition underlying this book. Their ideal is a history of the Victorian press "to all its constituent parts", and that means national and provincial newspapers, quarterlies,

reviews, weeklies, specialist journals, even comics. In this area of study the basic terminology is so vague as to make it difficult to be sure one is correct when referring to a magazine, a journal, or a review, and in the context envisioned by Shattock and Wolff the word "press" would seem to indicate any printed text published in serial form, for whatever length of time and of whatever quality, excluding only books. Whether a project based on so inclusive a definition can ever be manageable is for the future to justify. Immediately, the essays collected in *The Victorian Periodical Press* are valuable both as case studies and for the ways in which they chart the various areas of study that would need to be explored fully in any overall view.

The *Victorian Periodical Press* is divided into three sections. "The Critic as Journalist", "Management and Money", and "The New Readership", though the individual essays constantly raise questions - of circulation and readership and thematic links. In spite of this, a fairly fundamental distinction can be made between those essays in which the centre of interest is the periodical itself (its organization, editorial policy, funding, or character: editorial content and readership), and those in which the principal interest lies outside the periodical, in a major author's use of this form of publishing or in the kinds of concern that are reflected or projected by periodicals. At least half of the essays come into this second category.

The most direct instances are, Brian Maidment's study of Ruskin's use of the periodical press to capture new kinds of readers; Ann and John Robson on John Stuart Mill's various excursions into journalism; Helene Roberts on the treatment by the mid-Victorian press of art exhibitions; and John Woodford's demonstration that during the 1850s we can observe in the periodicals important changes taking place in the role of the literary critic. All these essays could be placed just as appropriately in other contexts, as

also, with stronger qualifications, could some of the wider-ranging contributions. Brian Harrison, for example, on the development of periodicals to support specific reform movements, notably temperance and feminism; Aled Jones's fascinating revelation that in the 1870s there was a concerted attempt to set up a provincial newspaper or network to express a radical working-class point of view; and Donald Gray's researches into the equally fascinating, but murkier, regions of early Victorian scandalous journalism.

Louis James on the *Servant's Magazine* and Michael Wolff on the *British Controversialist* and *Impartial Inquirer* form useful bridges to those contributors whose concern is primarily with questions of management and organization. Joanne Shattock's impressive unravelling of the in-fighting that surrounded the control of the *North British Review*; Sheila Rosenberg on John Chapman's desperate attempts to keep the *Westminster Review* financially solvent; Maurice Milne on the rise and decline of Sunderland's flourishing newspapers at the turn-of-the-century; and Scott Bennett's "Revolutions in Thought" which claims modestly to "attempt nothing but to open discussion of the commercial side of mass market publishing" and develops into a convincing argument that the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge can be considered the founders of the mass-market periodical in Britain.

One of the outstanding strengths of *The Victorian Periodical Press* is its demonstration that virtually no area of Victorian life was uninfluenced by, or impervious to, the power of the press: it is the ubiquity of the press that makes it simultaneously such an awkward subject to grasp and an integral part of so many areas of study. Brian Maidment points out that the magisterial Cook and Wedderburn edition of Ruskin's works has served to bolster the common twentieth-century belief that a writer produces books or volumes, whereas familiarity with Ruskin's varied modes of publication reveals a complex reliance on serial and periodical forms which can affect in subtle ways how we read those stately volumes (or, indeed, the pocket editions) that eventually emerged. The similar case of Matthew Arnold has long been understood, and also applies to many other Victorian writers whose "books" would, in the words of George Salabury, "never have appeared as books at all, if it had not been for the periodical press."

One important motive behind that movement from periodical to book publication was the desire by writers to escape the limited readership of the periodicals. It is obviously the case that many people read periodicals without buying their own copies, but still, circulation figures show that most of the periodicals reached relatively few readers. At mid-century, the long-established *Quarterly and Edinburgh* reviews had sales figures of about 8,000, while the radical *Westminster* and the Free Church *North British* survived uneasily on circulations of approximately 1,500. At its most suc-

cessful moments a scandal and gossip magazine like *Renton Nicholson's The Town* could sell 8,000 copies per week, while the monthly *Servant's Magazine* made do with 4,000 and the intensely serious *British Controversialist* sold about 2,000.

There were some notable exceptions to this general trend among the reform periodicals discussed by Brian Harrison, the most spectacular example being the *Band of Hope Review* which in 1861 could boast a weekly circulation of 250,000. Only the *Penny Magazine* among the periodicals aimed at a general readership could even dream of reaching such a huge audience, and then it did so only for a very short time. The true significance of the *Penny Magazine*, however, is that the attempt by Charles Knight and the SDUK to establish a mass-market was conscious and calculated. The experiment failed, but it was to be revived with greater success later in the century by a quite different breed of publishers and editors.

Circulation figures considered by themselves have only a limited interest: it is the living people they stand in place of that matter, and identifying them is clearly what Scott Bennett describes as "one of the most intractable problems in studies of periodical literature". Evidence about the financial backers of periodicals or the wage rates paid to different groups of printers and journalists may be hidden away, but, as the essays here show, it can be uncovered. Bringing to life the people who read, enjoyed or hated these various publications, must necessarily involve more conjectural methods. Even the specialist journals really tell us immediately only that the readers shared a specialist interest in other respects they might well have had little in common. As one way of reaching through to the values and attitudes of readers, Louis James suggests that we should approach periodicals in much the same way as the literary critic analyses a novel or poem, by accepting that each publication is a "microcosm, to a lesser or greater extent, of a cultural outlook", and drawing our conclusions not only directly from content but indirectly from format which is itself "a form of communication". Michael Wolff is clearly sympathetic to this approach, and his essay on *The British Controversialist* is, like James's on the *Servant's Magazine*, a skilful attempt to define in one segment of that elusive Victorian reading public.

But a segment it is and a segment it remains, heightening once more the difficulty of moving from specific case studies to an overall view. In this respect the comparison between the historian and the periodicalist and the literary critic could provide a salutary lesson as well as a useful method. That particular kind of critic at least got trapped in the text and couldn't get out. It would be so if the Victorian periodical should come to exercise a similar disabling temptation. *The Victorian Periodical Press* is not entirely free of that danger, but it does also offer an impressive range of escape routes.

Actively authoring

Brian Martin

Philip Fisher
Making Up Society: The Novels of George Eliot
244pp. University of Pittsburgh Press.
£13.
0 8223 2800 6

Philip Fisher's thesis is that George Eliot shifted from writing social novels to making up social fictions. In what Fisher calls her "triumphant phase" she wrote three novels: *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*. *Middlemarch* he regards as her "single great social fiction", in which both author and characters combine in the process of "making up" the book. As Fisher writes, in his own peculiar style of word-juggling, "Individual author, one another and authority: his another's."

This development is explored in

relation to the history of the novel as a literary form, and comparisons are made with the techniques of both James and Joyce. The fate of the self and the fate of society later on which the fate of the self is locked, are what Fisher is concerned with. He concludes that Eliot's novels are an attempt to find a new expression for both individual and society.

Eliot herself had her own problems in finding expressible identity: first Mary Ann Evans, then Marian, then Marian Lewis, then George Eliot, and then back to Mary Ann adding her legal husband's surname, Cross. Such was her difficulty in placing herself within contemporary English society. Fisher's discussion is no doubt important to many students of the novel but tedious to read. It is a pity that his arguments in language are as obscure as the subject matter. The book is a good example of what he says appears in the rules of an academic confabulation. Lamb's advice: "Coleridge would not go amiss: 'Cultivate simplicity.'"

Beating the block

Antonia Phillips

ENRIQUE HANK LOPEZ
Conversations with Katherine Anne Porter
326pp. Boston: Little, Brown. £8.95.
0 316 53199 5

Katherine Anna Porter lived a life of self-imposed wandering, of ondiolous removals and rented rooms (she travelled light: two embattled suitcases stuffed with manuscripts, notebooks and dresses) as she crisscrossed the United States, Mexico and Europe. Until her seventies, when the best-selling *Ship of Fools* and a Pulitzer prize for her *Collected Stories* brought her financial reward, she lived "forever on the barest of margins". In *Conversations with Katherine Anne Porter*, Enrique Hank Lopez presents us with a digest of tape-recorded conversations he had with Porter during the last two decades of her life, supplemented with material from her stories.

She was born in Texas into a large, long-established family, whose fortunes - she may have exaggerated past prosperities - had tumbled since the Civil War: "I am the grandchild of a lost war, and I have blood-knowledge of what life can be in a defeated country on the bare bones of privation." In conversation she reveals and Southern pride and an ache for mathebellum lavishness; but there is also a pioneer toughness and realism that must have sustained her throughout her life. The myths and ancestral past furnished her with the material for many of her stories - which are not, surprisingly perhaps, sentimental elegies. (A certain amount of romanticism about the "Old South" is forgivable: if an epoch and place can be romantic, the Old South is.) Rather, her stories probe a painful territory in which personal experience collides with that mythology and mystique.

The facts of her early life are vague - do, apparently, as much to a desire to conceal her true age as to faulty memory. The youngest of four and motherless from infancy, she was brought up by a demanding father and indomitable grandmother. Her childhood combined the deprivations of convent life (although most of her immediate family seems to have been variously Protestant) and great freedom at home, with visits to racetracks (betting allowed), theatres and shooting galleries; more importantly, there was total freedom in the choice of reading-matter, which surely included *Rabelais*, *Montaigne*, *Pierre* and *Wuthering Heights*. She cut herself off from family and safety by a secret, and unconsummated, marriage at sixteen; which was followed by a living by journalism, hack-writing, ghosting, film-extra work; as a singer of Scottish ballads, and as a ballet teacher in Mexico (squeezing it in between small revolutionary errands).

Much later she wrote scripts in Hollywood, and taught literature and writing on exhausting university circuits. Drifting around Texas, then north to Chicago, and west to Colorado (where she almost died of influenza - ill-health shadowed her throughout her life), she eventually landed in Greenwich Village.

Her long life, (1890-1980) had its share of excitement: revolutionary Mexico; the Paris of Joyce, Hemingway and Gertrude Stein; Berlin in the 1930s (her meeting with Lopez is the subject of a chapter of Lopez's book that arouses scepticism, reinforcing the conviction that Katherine Anne Porter was not a housewife and self-mythologizer too complicated for her interviewers). And, of course, there were many American literary friends. But there was also despair and dreariness, self-doubt and a guilty sense of failure. *Ship of Fools* was notorious for having taken twenty years to finish. As Lopez writes, Porter suffered from a writer's block so chronic that she "was at the toughness of a spirit". On these circumstances, to Lopez, the writing of fiction, as it

chief priority. Plagued by publishers to produce more, and to produce a novel, she simply could not - except in "her own time". There were many fallow years, including ones with Guggenheim and Yaddo fellowships; long months of complete solitude, while she struggled to write; and sudden creative stints: the story that made her reputation, "Flowering Judas", she claims to have written in five hours. Three short novels, *Old Mortality*, *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider* and *Noon Wine* (a story about the intrusiveness of evil as devastating as any by Flannery O'Connor), were apparently written in seven days each, within the space of a few months. When she did write, her first drafts tended to be final; but before that, the stories would churn around inside her for years. Nor could she write when married, as she was twice more, to much younger men. She bolted from both these marriages: the loss of privacy and independence was not made tolerable by the security they offered. Even the ownership of her first house, when she was over fifty, was too confining, and it was abandoned after thirteen months.

Lopez's book cannot fail to be a little interesting, since Katherine Anne Porter was an intriguing literary figure, a Southern writer whose place, if not exactly alongside Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor, is at least close by. But one's sense of what she was like is also obliterated by Lopez's often simplistic, cliché-ridden and pompous comments - there is an embarrassing piece of armchair psychoanalysis about Porter's compulsive restlessness. His cloying reverence heightens our feeling of her determination to let others know her only under certain chosen aspects - there may have been a *Blanche Dubois* lurking in her. It is frustrating to be provided with so few dates and facts, and not to know how closely Lopez's indirect reports follow what Porter actually said to him. When we do have the benefit of both quotation and reported speech, the discrepancy of tone is unvarying. Consequently, one would be happier with what can be gleaned from the stories themselves, particularly those shorter and short novels featuring Miranda - in Spanish, "the seeing one". But her *Collected Stories* is not in print in England.

The germination process

Lachlan Mackinnon

ALAN BURNS and CHARLES SUGNET
The Imagination on Trial: British and American writers discuss their working methods
170pp. Allison and Busby. £8.95 (paperback). £3.95.
0 85031 383 X

The title of this book of interviews and more public question-and-answer sessions with writers of fiction is taken from Wilson Harris, who says "If the imagination is on trial, then I don't see why imaginative writers whose life depends on the imagination should not speak occasionally, rather than run away. Writers have no definitive thing of No, I don't speak about my own work." I think this is one time when it's valid to say something. Pressed to elucidate, Harris explains that what he means is that "there's an enormous necessity, something crying out from the depth of life, to relate in various ways to the objective world." He feels a humanistic requirement to make strange the apparently objective world of institutions, a requirement voiced in different ways by many of the writers interviewed (J. G. Ballard, E. V. Rieu, John Gardner, John Hawkes, B. S. Johnson, Tom Mallin, Michael Moorcock, Grace and Alan Burns). As Charles Sugnet says in his introduction, "There is a great deal of personal concern among the writers interviewed here, but very little moral certitude."

This absence of dogma is related to a

Between the books

Paul Levy

ANNE OLIVIER BELL and ANDREW McNEILLIE (Editors)
The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume IV 1931-1935
416pp. The Hogarth Press. £15.
0 7012 0467 2

How wrong we get Virginia Woolf, and what a lot of nonsense is written (and spoken) about her by her admirers as well as her detractors. Now that her letters are in print and the penultimate volume of her diaries is published, we are in a position to know as much about her as about almost any literary figure in history. Yet people persist in praising or damning her for the stranger reasons. The present volume of diaries covers a period in which Mrs Woolf enjoyed mental stability. A right reading of the passages in them that refer to her earlier bouts of instability gives the lie to those recent books and articles that claim, for example, that she was never mad, or that she was somehow mistreated by her husband. She, at least, was quite clear about the nature of her earlier illnesses.

Certainly Virginia Woolf was a remarkable person; but much less remarkable, on the evidence of her diaries, than she appears to those who see her as a monster of selfishness and snobishness, or as a wilful creator of literary obscurity. In the years 1931 to 1935, at least, her preoccupations were similar to those of most people of her background and calling. In the first place, domestic life with its pleasures and its cares. In second place, her writing. These were the years of *The Waves* (the agonizingly slow progress and surprising commercial success of which Leonard Woolf included in his expurgated version of the diaries), *The Years*, *Flush* and *The Common Reader* (Second Series).

Social life occupied the third place in Virginia Woolf's hierarchy of concerns in this period. It might very well have been even more important, for these years she lost two of her greatest friends, Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry, and a third, younger one, Francis Birrell. Deeply affected by Strachey's death - there are dozens of entries about it - she none the less anticipated

Carrington's response to it with ominously cool rationality: "She says she will kill herself - quite reasonable, but better to wait until the first shock is over and so. Suicide seems to me quite sane."

In the fourth place, these diaries record her thoughts and views about politics, both in the narrow sense (the General Election of 1931, Baldwin succeeding Ramsay MacDonald in June, 1935, Labour Party conference) and in the wider one (economic affairs, going off the gold standard, the rise of Fascism). Even the admirers of Virginia Woolf are too ready to concede to those who dislike her (those whom she called "Bloombury balters", for example), that her interest in public affairs was abnormally small, or somehow not authentic. Her entries for the autumn of 1931, to choose a difficult example, reflect as much awareness of the abandonment of the gold standard as we could expect of a contemporary novelist-diarist with respect to monetarism, say. Misleading things have been said recently, in the press and on the radio, claiming that Virginia Woolf was nearly oblivious to the political atmosphere of her own times. Of course, it is not surprising that her husband, who was political to his finger-tips, should have said in *Downton All the Way* that "she was the least political animal that has lived since Aristotle invented the definition", for that was by comparison with his own attitude. But it is a little strange that the editors of Virginia Woolf's letters should endorse that view, for I think it is not supported by those diaries, to which they had access.

The diaries are so decent, and written with such evident speed, that they often give the impression of being only shorthand for the full expression of the thought they contain. In many cases in which conversation is being recorded, it is not easy to tell who is the speaker; and often it is only a discreet intervention by the editor that makes identification of the interlocutors possible.

There are those who have praised the literary quality of the diaries, sometimes in order to disparage by contrast Mrs Woolf's published work. It has even been claimed that the novels are too polished and lack the freshness of the diaries. But the real merit of these diaries is extra-literary.

They give the pleasure we get from gossip and from history. Those who dislike Virginia Woolf for snobishness will find grounds for their feelings in this volume, of an order that would have astonished even Wyndham Lewis - as when she records categorically that her husband is not a gentleman, and his brothers aren't either (June 25, 1935). But this must be balanced against another surprise in the book, which is the extent and frequency of her dealings with the Woolf family. With old Mrs Woolf, Leonard's mother, and with his sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews, Virginia exchanged the visits that would have been expected at the time of any member of a large and prosperous Jewish family.

Anyone who has ever been foolish enough seriously to accuse Virginia Woolf of antisemitism ought to look at the records of those visits, and at the passage where she comments on Leonard's feelings at the time of the publication of *After the Deluge*. He despaired because the reviewer in the *TLS* "only gave half a column of belittlement" to his book. Leonard Woolf was sure that the result of this damnation at insufficient length would be that librarians would balk at paying 15s for it. "Its his curious pessimistic temper," his wife recorded in her diary, "something deeper than reason, something, many would say, that one can deal with. Influenza has exactly the same effect, liberating the irrational despondency which I see in all Woolves, and connect with centuries of oppression." It is evident from passages such as this one that Virginia Woolf understood and had sympathy for this particularly Jewish sort of gloom.

But the deepest pleasures to be got from this brilliantly edited volume are those of closer acquaintance with Virginia Woolf's everyday life. For example, her thrilled acceptance of the luxuries her increasing royalties bought, such as their new Lanchester motor car, or her marvelling at the uncomfortable bathroom arrangements which T. S. Eliot tolerated when he lodged at the Rectory of St Stephen's, Kensington, where "he shares a bath with curates". The picture that emerges is neither of an aesthete nor of an ascetic, but of a more rounded human being than we might suspect possible of a person who has an entire academic coterie devoted to her.

Reed and Grace Paley address audiences at the University of Minnesota. In the more private, British format, J. G. Ballard tells Burns that the writer is "on the arena of the lion's terms". The American writer Julia Heyman and stamperes his auditors: barely twitching at the goods of questions. Where Burns agrees to become a more truly self-offering Michael Parkinson nudges his interlocutors gently towards the guided monologue, the American writer loose in academic effaces his questioners altogether. This is particularly noticeable with Grace Paley, who presents a more vibrant, dynamic and easy persona than her distinctively quiet prose leads one to expect, and with Samuel Reed, whose audience takes up his comparison of his use of WoodDoo to the WASP use of Olypus without raising the distinct differences of cultural continuity he tramples over. The American writer participates in the shamanistic rite, the British admits us gingerly to his house.

In a different form, then, the Anglo-American divide this book intends to bridge reappears, but, importantly, not as the difference in methods and intentions which is often proclaimed. The interviews appear to be offered specifically to young writers, that they may learn some of the secrets of the craft; I doubt whether knowing that Alan Sillitoe appears only half-conscious of the state of his garden will really wake the muse, but these interviews do offer interestingly diverse and usually intelligent perspectives on what Alan Burns calls "the grand old form of this century, so vital, so fecund, so eloquent, so commensurate."

Michael Hofmann

